

Application No. 10/708,315
Amendment dated February 14, 2006
Reply to Office Action of November 15, 2005

REMARKS

This Amendment responds to the Office Action mailed November 15, 2005.

Claims 1-12 remain pending in the application and claims 1-8 are rejected. Claims 9-12 were withdrawn in view of a Restriction Requirement. Claim 1 has been amended and claim 9-12 have been cancelled, without prejudice and reserving the right to pursue such claims in a continuing application.

Applicants would like to thank the Examiner, Alicia Chevalier, for the telephone interview with Applicants' representative, David W. Dorton, on February 3, 2006. During the interview, claim 1 was discussed with respect to the references of record. In particular, Applicants' representative noted differences between the claimed invention and U.S. Patent No. 6,440,514 to Ueno et al. The Examiner suggested amendments to claim 1 that would more sharply define the claim language. Claim 1 has now been amended as suggested by the Examiner and described more fully below. Accordingly, Applicants respectfully request reconsideration in view of the following remarks.

Claims Rejected Under 35 U.S.C. §102

Claims 1-8 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) as being anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 6,440,514 to Ueno et al. Claim 1 is the only independent claim of this rejected group and has been amended herein to more sharply define the claim language. Specifically, amended claim 1 recites:

A non-padded automotive interior trim assembly for an automobile, comprising:

a rigid substrate member forming at least part of a structural support of the trim assembly and including a least one target area for providing a soft feel to the trim assembly;

a plurality of apertures formed in said substrate member within said target area; and

a flexible skin disposed directly contacting upon said substrate member, at least proximate said target area.

To anticipate a claim under 35 U.S.C. §102, the reference must disclose each and every element recited in the claim. Ueno '514 fails to teach or suggest each and every element recited in amended claim 1. Specifically, Ueno '514 does not teach a non-padded automotive interior trim assembly having a flexible skin disposed directly contacting upon a rigid substrate member, at least proximate a target area having a plurality of apertures formed in the target area. Rather, Ueno '514 is directed to an instrument panel having a base 11 formed from hard synthetic resin, over which a foam layer 14 is disposed to separate the base 11 from outer skin layer 13. The outer skin layer 13 therefore is not "disposed directly contacting upon said substrate member," as required by claim 1. Moreover, the structure of the instrument panel of Ueno '514 is precisely the type of trim assembly that the present invention seeks to improve upon by eliminating padded material, such as foam layer 14. (See Application at paragraphs 0002 and 0003.) For at least these reasons, Applicants respectfully request that the rejection of claim 1 over Ueno '514 be withdrawn.

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Claims 2-8 each depend from independent claim 1 and are therefore in condition for allowance for at least the reasons stated above for claim 1. Accordingly, Applicants respectfully request that the rejections of claims 2-8 over Ueno '514 be withdrawn.

Conclusion

In view of the foregoing amendments to the claims and the remarks set forth herein, Applicants respectfully believe this case is in condition for allowance and respectfully request allowance of the pending claims. If the Examiner believes any matter requires further discussion, the Examiner is respectfully asked to telephone the undersigned attorney so that the matter may be promptly resolved. The Examiner's prompt attention to this matter is appreciated.

Applicants are of the opinion that no fee is due as a result of this communication. However, if any such fee is due, please apply such fees or credits necessary to complete this communication to Deposit Account No. 23-3000.

Respectfully submitted,

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